

Attributable to Mr. Sylvester

~~BACKGROUND~~ BRIEFING

- - -

The Pentagon

Friday

November 9, 1962

- - -

SPOKESMAN: I would like to give you the reports to date on the intercepts that have been made, as follows:

The first ship I am speaking of I will spell. D-V-I-N-O-G-O-R-S-K.

This was intercepted early today by the destroyer BLANDY. The report received says that the Russians removed the tarpaulins from the missiles, but that an inner skin which we had expected was not removed. Indeed, in each case that I shall tell you about here, the heavy tarpaulin was withdrawn, but the missile, as we had expected, was enclosed in a skin-tight casing to protect against sea exposure and corrosion.

The photographs taken will be returned here for examination by the expert analysts who first identified the presence of the missiles on the now dismantled sites.

Now, the text contact that I shall speak of --

QUESTION: What is the time on that?

ANSWER: What I am giving you is everything that has come in now that is available. Early morning is the best I can do on the first one, after daylight.

The next one I shall report on is the ATAPAYEVSK, intercepted by the destroyer HOLDER at 3:45 yesterday, but the time of the exact inspection has not yet been determined in the reports. No missile components apparent.

QUESTION: This happened at 3:45 yesterday?

ANSWER: That is what I said.

QUESTION: But you said the time of inspection had not been determined?

ANSWER: That is correct.

QUESTION: What do you mean by that?

ANSWER: I can't tell you any more that that is what the report is.

MORE

That was first intercepted -- the exact hour when they pulled back the tarpaulin I do not have. That is what the report from the Commander of the HOLDER says: that no missile components were apparent.

The next one is the LABINSK.

QUESTION: What is this about no missiles?

ANSWER: That is what the report from the Commander of the HOLDER says: that no missile components were apparent.

The next one is the LABINSK.

QUESTION: What did they pull the tarp off of?

ANSWER: Well, if you will wait a little bit, you will see that the tarpaulin is not only over the missiles; it is over other things on the deck, too.

LABINSK, L-a-b-i-n-s-k by the NEWPORT NEWS and the destroyer LEARY. The time, 7:30 a.m. this morning. Photographs were taken by the NEWPORT NEWS helicopter. The Russians removed the heavy outer covers from the missiles. That is the extent of the report from this interception.

QUESTION: But there were missiles on there?

ANSWER: Correct.

QUESTION: How many missiles?

ANSWER: We haven't numbers.

QUESTION: NEWPORT NEWS skippered by Commander Hord?

ANSWER: I will have to find out. I don't know who was the Commander.

This is a very brief report, if you look at the time and know what the traffic is coming back. This is exactly the full report we have as to now. We do not have all the details. They have not been available.

The next one is the VOLGOLES, intercepted by the destroyer VESOLE, time, 7:30 a.m. today. All outer covers removed and missiles were observed. Photos were taken.

The next one --

QUESTION: It does not indicate how it was taken, by the U.S., by choppers, or --

ANSWER: It does not.

The next one is the KOMSOMOL by the NORFOLK.

QUESTION: Destroyer?

ANSWER: DL-1, time, 9:30 a.m. today. Report has not been received as yet. The only fact we have received is that it came alongside of the KOMSOMOL about 11 o'clock.

Other intercepts, another four are expected sometime either the rest of the day or early tomorrow morning.

QUESTION: Did you say four?

ANSWER: Yes, four more that I know of.

QUESTION: Four more have taken place or are --

ANSWER: NO. Four more are expected either before the end of the day or tomorrow morning.

From one of the intercepts we have a rather complete report which I will paraphrase for you. This is the intercept of the ALAPAYEVSK.

QUESTION: After the first shipment was intercepted?

ANSWER: That is right. The first contact was made by a helicopter from the WASP. The communication by light, somewhat slow apparently, and occasionally unclear or garbled, but on the whole was good.

One of the interesting things is that the helicopter transmitted in Russian and the ship transmitted in English.

QUESTION: Do we have any place that this happened?

ANSWER: In the water in the sea.

QUESTION: You mean the Russian ships travel on ground?

ANSWER: That is what I said.

QUESTION: There was immediately friendly agreement upon the part of the Russian ship to interpose no objection to photography from the helicopter, and quite a few good photographs were taken. That apparently was just before sundown.

There was a gift exchange between the helicopter and the members of the Russian ship. The Russians offered a tie clasp and a bottle of Vodka.

QUESTION: Did the helicopter land?

ANSWER: No.

QUESTION: How can they swap gifts?

ANSWER: With a rope.

Continuing the report here, there was much waving. Do you want me to give you the report?

Much waving of hands. When the helicopter departed, the Master of the Russian ship put his hands like this over his head in a friendly gesture, and the fellows in the helicopter returned it with a friendly gesture.

The ship appeared to be lightly loaded and from what they reported, they observed on deck fuel trucks and two of them appeared to be oxidizing trucks. There were five other trucks apparently with loads of drums and miscellaneous small boxes. The bodies of two of these trucks were covered with canvas.

How many? Four.

QUESTION: Fuel trucks and those were oxidizing?

ANSWER: I said may be oxidizing. After all, there was apparently a dump truck, also covered, and apparently there were road scrapers, earth movers. They observed a small crane, one of them painted green. Crane, C-r-a-n-e.

There were three wood-burning field messes on the port side and one of them was already going for supper.

QUESTION: Did you say how many people were aboard.

ANSWER: I didn't.

There were at least more than 150, somewhere between 150 and 200 men were observed. The helicopter people reported they seemed to be young men, many of them were not wearing their shirts. They seemed to be happy to go home, probably.

Let me finish this, would you?

The HOLDER then came in about dusk and received a message by light from the ALAPAYEVSK which said, in effect, that it had rocket material aboard in accordance with the Government of the USSR and the U. S..

To the naval personnel who did the observing, the trucks and cranes and the graders seemed to have been used a great deal.

QUESTION: Did you say NATO or Naval?

ANSWER. Naval. The other equipment they saw appeared to be reasonably new. They consider that there were more personnel aboard the ship than they would normally expect to see there.

Now, as you know, if you don't, I can tell you, that two pools of five men took off this morning from here to Patuxent. They should be in the air now. They are down in that area with the hope of witnessing a contact late this afternoon, we hope before dark. The weather isn't too good. They were all willing to run that chance and we expect that another group will be going off, another pool will be going off again tomorrow morning for observation of a contact which we hope and expect to see made sometime tomorrow morning.

That is the extent of the material I have. When we get more material, I will attempt to make it available.

QUESTION: You said something about exchange of gifts, seemed to be one way. How did they make the contact?

ANSWER: The thing that we gave them was dropped down.

QUESTION: Did we give them?

ANSWER: I have given you exactly what the message says. This is exactly what the message said. It was an exchange. It says for gift exchange, a tie clasp and a bottle of vodka. I can't go beyond that. This is all that we have.

QUESTION: The helicopter gave the tie clasp?

ANSWER: I am telling you exactly what they have reported; exactly that.

QUESTION: What is the classification of the message?

ANSWER: Look, this is coming in code. You want to know every detail? Don't worry; it is classified.

QUESTION: How do we know there was a missile in that casing?

ANSWER: How do we know? We are satisfied from what we have seen. As I said, the final determination will be made when the pictures taken come back by the same analysts who discovered these missiles in the first instance. So far as the skin casing is concerned, we expected that there would be such a skin casing for the reason that I told you.

QUESTION: Are our pictures so good we can see through --

ANSWER: We have not seen the pictures.

QUESTION: Is the casing opaque?

ANSWER: The contours of the missile will be satisfactory to the people who see them.

I am saying that the responsible people of this Government are satisfied as of now that there are missiles. I have said throughout that the final determination will be made only after the pictures taken are brought back and seen.

QUESTION: Do we have any other evidence besides?

ANSWER: I am not able to report at this time on anything other than what I have given you.

E N D

-5-